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Financing of the United Nations Observer Mission in Liberia

Report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions

1. The Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions has considered the report of the Secretary-General containing the revised budget of the United Nations Observer Mission in Liberia (UNOMIL) for the period from 1 July 1997 to 30 June 1998 (A/52/401). During its consideration of the report, the Committee met with representatives of the Secretary-General, who provided additional information.

2. UNOMIL was established by the Security Council by its resolution 866 (1993) of 22 September 1993 for an initial period of seven months. Its mandate has since then been extended and adjusted by the Council in subsequent resolutions, the latest being resolution 1116 (1997) of 27 June 1997, by which the Council extended the mandate of the Observer Mission for a period of three months, from 1 July to 30 September 1997, in the expectation that it would terminate on that date. In this connection, the Advisory Committee notes that, in paragraph 46 of his report to the Security Council of 13 August 1997 (S/1997/643), the Secretary-General informed the Council that, in keeping with Council resolution 1116 (1997), the mandate of UNOMIL would expire on 30 September 1997.

3. As indicated in paragraph 13 of the report of the Secretary-General (A/52/401), total resources made available to the Observer Mission, from its inception on 22 September 1993 until 30 June 1998, amount to $153,874,313 gross. Estimated expenditures total $119,834,700 gross and credits returned to Member States amount to $34,039,700 gross. A total of $115,079,147 has been assessed on Member States from inception to 30 September 1997; contributions received for that period amount only to $96,625,300, thus resulting in a shortfall of $18,453,847.

4. In connection with the United Nations presence after the withdrawal of UNOMIL, the Advisory Committee recalls that in paragraphs 18 to 20 of the final report of the Secretary-General on UNOMIL of 12 September 1997 (S/1997/712), the Secretary-General proposed to establish a small United Nations office in Liberia. The Committee notes that details relating to this office, including its structure, number of posts and mode of financing, have not been given in the budget document (A/52/401). The Committee believes that in future this type of information should be included in budget submissions and, in this case, the details should be provided to the Fifth Committee as soon as possible.

5. The Advisory Committee notes that there is no performance report for the period from 1 July 1996 to 30 June 1997. Upon enquiry, the Committee was informed that the report would be submitted in January 1998. The Committee regrets the lack of timely performance data.

6. In its resolution 51/3 C of 13 June 1997, the General Assembly appropriated the amount of $20,447,100 gross ($18,918,300 net) for the maintenance of the Observer Mission for the period from 1 July 1997 to 30 June 1998, inclusive of the amount of $758,700 for the support account for peacekeeping operations, to be assessed at a monthly rate

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of $1,703,925 gross ($1,576,525 net), subject to the decision of the Security Council to extend the mandate of the Observer Mission beyond 30 June 1997.

7. By a letter dated 14 July 1997, the Advisory Committee concurred in the Secretary-General's request to enter into commitments in an amount not exceeding $3,273,800 gross from existing resources approved for the period 1 July 1996 to 30 June 1997 for the electoral process in July 1997. Requirements for the electoral process had not been included in the initial budget request nor are they part of the present revised submission.

8. The revised cost estimate for the period from 1 July 1997 to 30 June 1998 amounts to $8,952,900 gross ($8,434,900 net). This estimate represents a decrease of $11,494,200 gross ($10,483,400 net) from the amount of $20,447,100 gross ($18,918,300 net) approved by the General Assembly in its resolution 51/3 C. As indicated in paragraph 18 of the report of the Secretary-General (A/52/401), the reduction is attributable to the successful completion of the responsibilities of the Observer Mission and its consequent liquidation. The breakdown of the estimate is contained in annex I to the report of the Secretary-General (A/52/401), along with supplementary information contained in annex II.

9. The revised cost estimates provide for the liquidation of the Observer Mission, including the cost of withdrawal, the cost of the administrative closing of the Mission and the cost of the completion of residual tasks. The revised estimates also provide for the withdrawal of 80 international civilian personnel, seven United Nations Volunteers and 146 local staff.

10. With regard to staff resources, the Advisory Committee notes from paragraph 22 of the report of the Secretary-General (A/52/401) and paragraph 2 of annex II, section C, to that report that provision is made for eight person months (one P-4 and one Field Service staff) for the completion of the residual administrative tasks beyond 31 December 1997 outlined in annex III. The Committee understands that this provision is made in response to the Committee's request in paragraph 8 of its report (A/51/423/Add.2) that adequate staff should be made available to carry out the liquidation process efficiently.

11. The Advisory Committee notes from annex II, section A, item 7, to the report of the Secretary-General (A/52/401) that the amount for rent has increased from $50,040 per month for the previous period to $132,350 per month for the period from 1 July 1997 to 30 June 1998. Upon enquiry, the Committee was informed that the increase is attributable to a scarcity of accommodation in Liberia.

12. The Advisory Committee also notes from annex II, section A, item 22, that the monthly cost of commercial freight has increased from $1,000 to $139,467. The increase is attributable to the shipping and forwarding of all UNOMIL assets from the Mission area.

13. With regard to the disposal of assets, the Advisory Committee was informed that assets would be distributed to the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara, the United Nations Logistics Base at Brindisi and the United Nations Angola Verification Mission/United Nations Observer Mission in Angola. The Committee was also informed that a report on the subject would be issued in January 1998.

14. Provision is made in paragraph 1 of annex II, section C, to the report of the Secretary-General (A/52/401) for death and disability ($40,800). Upon enquiry, the Advisory Committee was informed that no incident of death had been recorded during the reporting period.

15. The Advisory Committee notes from paragraph 6 (e) of annex II, section C, that provision is made for the cost of travel of two officers of the Lessons-Learned Unit to Monrovia, Accra and Abuja ($13,900) to study lessons learned in UNOMIL and also cooperation between the Economic Community of West African States and UNOMIL. The Committee recommends that a clear policy be laid down regarding the manner in which the Unit's reports should be prepared; the Committee also suggests that resources for the lessons-learned activities from all sources of funding be indicated at the time of consideration of the support account so as to identify clearly the total scope of activities and resources.

16. In paragraph 24 (b) of his report (A/52/401), the Secretary-General requested the General Assembly to assess an additional amount of $3,841,125 gross ($3,705,325 net) taking into account the amount of $5,111,775 gross ($4,729,575 net) already authorized and assessed under the terms of Assembly resolution 51/3 C for the period from 1 July to 30 September 1997. Upon enquiry, the Advisory Committee was informed that of the total appropriation of $31,915,000 gross ($30,730,900 net) for the period from 1 July 1996 to 30 June 1997, preliminary expenditures amounted to $26,177,400 gross ($25,425,600 net), resulting in an unencumbered balance of $2,463,800 gross ($2,072,300 net), taking into account the additional amount of $3,273,800 gross ($3,233,000 net) committed for the electoral process (see para. 7 above). Taking into account this information, the Committee is of the opinion that there is no need for an additional assessment at the present time.